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Russia's exorbitant strategic cost incurred in its 'strategic pivot' to China is irrefutably true leading to perceptible loss of its global stature and negating President Putin's articulation of Russia as an independent power centre.

Irrefutable again is the strategic reality that in the trade-off for forging a Russia-China strategic nexus, Russia gambled away large chunks of its geopolitical capital in South Asia and South East Asia. China in return incurred no strategic losses exploiting Russia's pressing need for a partnership with China to offset United States residual Cold War hostilities.

China in return only facilitated the United States to effectively play the 'China Card' against Russia while China deceptively all along kept professing 'eternal friendship' with Russia. Had Russian leaders not heard such deceptive Chinese professions of eternal friendship in the 1950s and 1960s?

President Putin with his ambition for Russia's resurgence and reclaiming Russia's stature as an independent global power centre has over the last two decades been unable to dispense Russia's dependency on China.

President Putin has an opportunity to recast Russian foreign policy divorcing the China Factor as the prime determinant factor. The geopolitical situation in Indo Pacific Asia and Central Asia has dramatically changed with China getting isolated. Consequently, China can only prove to be a strategic liability for Russia in the years to come and that should provide an opportunity to Russia to rethink its strategic nexus with China.

In an overall strategic audit of the Russia-China strategic nexus in June 2016 what emerges as one Western policy analyst has observed is that today Russia stands reduced to a regional power with Superpower pretensions and China as a regional power has emerged as the great Superpower pretender. Russia itself has to blame itself for this predicament.

To get out of the above strategic fix, Russia has to recast its 'China Policy' heavily predicated on the premise that with China on its side Russia is better placed strategically to stand-up to the United States. Why does Russia overlook the fact that the United States needs Russia more than China in the strategic management of global trouble spots from Syria to the Asia Pacific?

In mid-June 2016, China seems to have lost its strategic sheen for the United States due to China's increasing confrontational postures against the United States and as a strategic upstart seeking strategic equivalence with the United States. China also seems to be losing its strategic sheen for Russia also not only because of the foregoing but also that with China's economy slowing down, with gas prices falling, and China's internal vulnerabilities getting pronounced, there is bound to be an increasing friction in trade and economic relations between Russia and China.

Russia's natural strategic alignment rests with Europe and this mutual dependency was functioning quite well till recently. It provided a better leverage to Russia to deal with the United States. Sadly for Russia, despite all the rhetoric that flows from Beijing on the 'eternal bonds' of the Russia-China strategic nexus, China has not contributed any leverages to Russia in dealing with the United States.

Reinforcing the above arguments that Russia has paid a heavy price for its strategic pivot to China, some more arguments are deduced below in the form of relevant questions that Russia needs to face and which should prompt Russia to re-evaluate its strategic pivot to China and which should rightfully prompt Russia to reclaim its trajectory to emerge as an independent global power centre.

Russia's 'China Pivot', notwithstanding that the process commenced under President Yeltsin, has resulted in Russia deviating from President Putin's declared objective of regaining Russia's stature as an 'independent power centre'. Perceptively, in mid-2016 Russia appears more of a Chinese satellite, a perception that suits the United States whose Cold War gladiators on Capitol Hill who mistakenly believe that China is a lesser threat to the United States than Russia. The strategic reality is markedly opposite.

Strategic audit of Russia's 'China Pivot' prompts asking the following main questions, besides many others (1) Has Russia gained in strategic stature by forging the Russia-China nexus? (2) Has Russia aligning with China emerged as a 'game changer' in the global power calculus? (3) Did the Russia-China strategic nexus empower Russia to play the 'China Card' against the United States? (4) Has China made an equitable investment in the Russia-China nexus?

Neither has Russia gained in strategic stature and nor have any strategic leverages accrued to Russia flowing from its strategic nexus with

China. On the contrary Russia stands reduced to a mere regional power overshadowed by a China deliberately being played up as stronger than Russia.

Russia-China strategic nexus did not emerge as a 'game –changer' in the global power calculus as the United States and the West viewed this so-called 'partnership' as a marriage of convenience and political and strategic expediency. Not much value was attached by them to the longevity of the Russia-China strategic nexus. Hence, the global assessment was that even if the Russia-China nexus survived, it was an inconsequential player because of the many vulnerabilities and strains that hover over his relationship.

Flowing from the above is the answer to the third question and that is the Russia-China strategic nexus never enabled Russia to play the 'China Card' against the United States. Simply, because China was attempting to move the United States to accept China as the second pole in global affairs and that the dyad of G-2 comprising United States-China should manage global affairs. Effectively, China therefore had relegated Russia to lower down the global ladder. So in actuality China had neutralised Russia playing the 'China Card' against the United States.

China has made no equitable strategic investments like Russia in the Russia-China strategic nexus. In a matter of fact China could be accused of 'double-timing' Russia in the play-out of the US-Russia-China triangular global power-play.

Russia had to pay a heavy price because of its 'China Predominant Factor' in its policy formulations which resulted in alienation of two of its most valued strategic partners, namely India and Vietnam. Russia is being forced to play second fiddle to China in Afghanistan. In Central Asia which has been Russia's traditional area of influence one finds China muscling into the region.

Has China lost strategically by hitching itself to the Russia-China strategic nexus? None, whatsoever. Pakistan and North Korea still stand strongly aligned and dependant on China. In fact China has gained by persuading Russia to tilt towards its 'iron brother' Pakistan, at the expense of India.

Concluding, it needs to be asserted that should Russia still aspire to emerge as an independent power centre, Russia would have to move out strategically from the shadows of China. Resurgence imperatives of Russia to reclaim its rightful strategic equivalence to the United States demand that Russia should jettison the Russia-China strategic nexus for sustaining which Russia has already paid exorbitant costs.

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